

# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

### NEWS RELEASE



*Cora Campbell, Commissioner*  
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#### **NORTHERN NORTON SOUND COMMERCIAL SALMON OPENINGS**

Commercial openings directed at chum salmon will occur this weekend in the northern Norton Sound Subdistricts 1, 2, and 3, the Nome, Golovin, and Elim Subdistricts. The marine waters from the Cape Nome jetty eastward to Topkok Head in Norton Sound Subdistrict 1, the Nome Subdistrict, will reopen commercial salmon fishing for 24 hours from 12:00 noon Saturday, July 20 to 12:00 noon Sunday, July 21. Norton Sound Subdistrict 2, the Golovin Subdistrict will reopen to commercial salmon fishing for 48 hours from 6:00 p.m. Saturday, July 20 to 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 22. The marine waters from the mouth of Carson Creek eastward to the mouth of Iron Creek in Norton Sound Subdistrict 3, the Elim Subdistrict, will also reopen to commercial salmon fishing from 6:00 p.m. Saturday, July 20 to 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 22. Permit holders in all three subdistricts are limited to 100 fathoms of net in aggregate length and gillnets must have a mesh size of 6 inches or less.

Escapement needs of chum salmon in drainages east of Cape Nome have already been met. Eldorado River weir chum salmon passage is nearly 16,000 fish, which is well above the escapement goal range of 6,000–9,200 chum salmon. Harvestable surpluses of chum salmon are available for commercial utilization east of Cape Nome. Normal and late run timing projections suggest the upper end the Nome and Snake River escapement goal ranges in the western half of the Nome Subdistrict will also be reached. Commercial openings west of Cape Nome are possible next week if escapement counts continue to improve.

Commercial chum salmon fishing was not allowed in Golovin Bay this season until now. This period is being granted because department biologists observed an estimated 16,000 chum salmon in the Boston Creek tributary alone, as well as several thousand chum salmon at the confluence of the Niukluk and Fish Rivers. The chum salmon run to the Fish River appears to be very late this season, but escapement of chum salmon into the Fish River has improved dramatically from those observed on July 9. July 18 survey results indicate that chum salmon escapement to the Niukluk River has a good chance of nearing the former tower-based escapement goal threshold of 23,000 chum salmon. Additionally, the bulk of the Niukluk River chum salmon run is believed to be in river by this date. Thus, Niukluk River chum salmon should comprise a miniscule proportion of the commercial harvest during the upcoming opening. Niukluk River tower is no longer operational, but department will fly a peak spawning ground

survey at the end of the month to index overall escapement of chum salmon into the Niukluk River.

Elim Subdistrict has also not been opened this season because of conservation concerns with chum salmon based on Kwiniuk River tower escapement falling short of the escapement goal. Interestingly, however, the nearby Tubutulik River escapement goal range is projected to be reached based on an early July survey of 4,600 chum salmon. A commercial fishing period is being allowed for 48 hours, but commercial fishing will be limited to the western half of the Elim Subdistrict from Carson Creek eastward to Iron Creek. This period will provide commercial permit holders with some late opportunity to target chum salmon, while minimizing the impact to the Kwiniuk River chum salmon escapement. Spawning ground surveys will also be flown later this month to index this season's Tubutulik River chum salmon escapement.

The department will evaluate catch statistics and escapement information following these openings to determine if additional commercial opportunity is warranted.